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ABSTRACT

Teacher induction may be defined as the period of transition from student to professional when beginning teachers need supervision and support to adjust to their new roles. Concerns within the profession about the large numbers of beginning teachers leaving the profession during their first 2 years as well as innovative reforms origination from outside the profession have stimulated the development of teacher induction programs. As a result of this renewal of interest in teacher preparation, many teacher induction programs are originating at state and local levels. This paper describes the development, implementation, and evaluation of a teacher induction program in a New Jersey suburban public school district. During the design phase of the project three specific objectives emerged: to help the new teachers gain success, to develop a support system for new teachers, and to serve as a facilitator not as an evaluator. The program format consisted of a roundtable discussion on a monthly topic. Participants were seven newly-hired elementary and secondary teachers. Appendices include samples of two data collection instruments used in the 8-month program: "Monthly Teacher Diary" and "Teacher Induction Program Evaluation." The teachers' responses to items found on these instruments are analyzed. (IAH)

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# A Collaborative Model for Teacher Induction

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ABSTRACT

One definition of teacher induction is the period of transition from student to professional when beginning teachers need supervision and support to adjust to their new roles. Concerns within the profession about the large numbers of beginning teachers leaving the profession during their first two years and innovative reforms emanating from outside the profession have stimulated the development of teacher induction programs as well. As a result of this renewed interest in teacher preparation, many teacher induction programs are originating at local and state levels. The purpose of this paper is to describe the development, implementation and evaluation of a teacher induction program in a suburban public school district in New Jersey.

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# A Collaborative Model for Teacher Induction

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Teacher induction is defined as the period of transition from student to professional when beginning teachers are offered supervision and support as they adjust to their new roles. Concerns within the profession about the large numbers (approximately 25%) of beginning teachers who leave the profession during their first two years (Schlecty and Vance, 1983) and innovative reforms emanating from outside the profession have stimulated the development of induction programs at local and state levels. The purpose of this paper is to describe the development, implementation and evaluation of a teacher induction program in a suburban public school district in New Jersey.

## Procedure

Research suggests that beginning teacher assistance programs must suit the needs of the teacher population in order to be effective. Therefore, the development of this program included an examination of the literature, surveys of experience teacher populations from urban and suburban schools, interviews with urban teachers and a pilot induction program in an urban parochial school district (Bercik and Blair, 1989a, Bercik and Blair-Larsen, 1989b, Blair and Bercik, 1988, Blair-Larsen and Bercik, 1989c).

Results from the pilot program suggest that the development of a broad-based support system is an essential component for a teacher induction program for new and returning teachers in urban parochial schools (Bercik and Blair, 1989a). According to interviews with the beginning teachers in the pilot, a successful teacher induction program model should be reactive to teachers' needs and reflective of positive educational strategies. In accordance with Huling-Austin's goals for teacher induction program (1990), three specific objectives emerged during the design phase of the project.

1) To help the new teachers gain success.
2) To develop a support system for new teachers.
3) To serve as a facilitator not an evaluator.

The present study attempted to duplicate the pilot program in a different setting from an urban parochial school to a suburban public school. At a meeting of a county-wide professional organization, a local district supervisor expressed interest in the program model. During the ensuing months, negotiations occurred with the central school administration. Because of the contractual agreement, the beginning teachers were invited at their late summer orientation meeting to participate in a voluntary program that would feature discussion of relevant topics at monthly meetings.

Accepting the invitation were seven newly-hired teachers who attended the initial meeting during the fourth week of school. The teachers represented a cross-section of the school population (grades 1-6, Senior High English and Special Education).

At the first session, the researcher/facilitator stressed the objectives for the program and outlined the format: a roundtable discussion of a monthly topic. Related to the first topic, the teachers expressed their uncertainty about the school routine. During this session, the teachers were given handouts featuring suggestions about their classroom schedules. One other handout was the Monthly Teacher Diary (Appendix A). This diary served as the means to open communication for individual concerns and to monitor the developmental stages of the new professionals during their first year. According to the responses for September, nearly all of the teachers listed organizational skills as their projected goal.

The agenda for the second session included classroom management and discipline. During a lively discussion centering on disciplinary techniques, the researcher/facilitator served as moderator while the teachers shared their adaptations of Canter's Assertive Discipline Model. Blank schedules were distributed for teachers to chart activities for each day to determine problem times, i.e., before lunch. The teachers described their preparation for their first parent conferences. A new member of the program, a substitute teacher in the district, spoke from her point of view as a parent of a mainstreamed child. In their diaries, some of the teachers questioned the report card format and grading procedures.

At the third session, a recently retired reading supervisor from a neighboring district shared general information about teacher observations and evaluations. During an open question and answer period, the teachers gained insight as to the purpose for observation and evaluation - professional development. According to the diaries, the holiday period was enjoyable and a bit overwhelming with each of the teachers anxious for a break. One teacher who had been enrolled in a graduate course vowed not to return for a few years because her hectic pace had caused many struggles in her family life.

For the fourth session, The teachers were asked about their daily tasks. There was considerable agreement among the new teachers that there is a never ending list. Time management strategies were suggested that included car pooling, informing family members of school pressures and developing family task sharing activities. The teachers were then asked how they relaxed and how much time they spent in this activity during the day. Although the teachers mentioned that they were engaged in a variety of hobbies, they agreed that there were no specific relaxation periods set aside as part of their daily routine. One teacher questioned whether this was a possible cause for teacher burnout. In completing the diaries, several teachers again wanted to have better organizational skills. According to Ryan (1990), some time in February new teachers begin to learn

the craft of teaching in a step-by-step fashion. During this session, it became evident that at least one teacher had begun that process when she questioned aloud whether what she was doing was correct.

A nationally known school librarian provided additional feedback when she spoke on the importance of a teacher's relationship with the school librarian. She suggested that teachers should spend time in the library/media center with their classes to familiarize them with available materials. She emphasized that librarians are service oriented and will find materials pertinent to teachers' units of instruction. Most of the teachers corroborated this and indicated plans to work more closely with them.

Reading/language instruction was the topic for the fifth session and questions were asked regarding grouping. A common concern was, "What do we do with the slower students when doing a total class activity?" The consensus was to identify a twenty minute block of time during the week to provide individual or small group instruction. Recognizing the importance of a weekly plan of instruction rather than just the daily plan is a step towards Fuller's Mastery Stage (Ryan, 1986). The teachers then mentioned their confusion about the evaluation checklist on the new basal reading series. It seemed that all of the new teachers were chosen to evaluate the correlation of a new series with the Reading Language Arts Curriculum Guide. According to the diaries, the teachers expressed relief about their final observations and evaluations for the school year.

The sixth session began with a definition of stress relevant to teachers. Because of their roles, teachers are always in the forefront. Sample daily and weekly schedules were distributed to examine ways to reduce stress. While reviewing the three stages of stress, the teachers confirmed that they were in the midst of the onset stage. Levels of resistance were rising because their future role in the district was unclear.

Most of the teachers' contracts had not been renewed, so there was a sense of shock pervading the seventh session. It was unusual that the school district supervisor, who served as program liaison, was the guest speaker at this session. Following some awkward moments, the supervisor questioned the teachers about their individual classroom programs. They were enthusiastic about their careers and interested in attending summer workshops on Learning Styles and Cooperative Learning sponsored by the district.

During the eighth session of the year, professional development relevant to the impending changes in the state-mandated teacher certification requirements was the topic. The eight teachers received Certificates of Achievement and letters of recognition for their participation each month in the voluntary teacher induction program (Appendix B). There were positive comments about the structure of the monthly sessions and the relevancy of the key topics.

Figures 1 and 2 are graphic analyses of the average of the teachers' ratings to one question in the Monthly Teacher Diary. Question five asked the teachers to rank themselves each of the eight consecutive months according to a Likert-type scale in seven areas: classroom management, classroom discipline, student rapport, faculty rapport, parent report, lesson planning and overall growth (See Appendix A).

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Insert Figure 1 Here.

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Closer examination of the individual teachers' scores for the seven areas in Figure 1 is important. Paired together, classroom discipline and classroom management were lower than the other areas. January seemed to be an especially difficult month for the new teachers. Classroom discipline remained an enigma throughout the year with little change in the self-analyses. During the latter stage of the year, there was a marked improvement in the teachers' perspectives of their classroom management. Again, according to Ryan (1986), new teachers begin to recognize their own professionalism at this stage of their development. For examination purposes, it seems appropriate to group together the socialization areas of parent rapport, student rapport and faculty rapport. Despite their concerns about parent conferences, these teachers considered rapport with parents as relatively high. Some first year teachers were parents and influenced others in their understanding of the parent/teacher relationship. For student rapport and faculty rapport, the teachers wrote in their diary entries that they enjoyed their roles as teachers in the classroom and in the school with more than half expressing love for the children in the classroom. According to the monthly responses, lesson planning seemed to be an area that was not consistent. The scoring was variable throughout the year and was parallel to curriculum changes, i.e., standardized testing periods.

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Insert Figure 2 Here

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In Figure 2, the teachers rated their overall growth throughout their first year as better than average. Again, following January, the latter part of the year reflected a more intensive acceptance of their professional development. One glance at Figure 2 suggests that mentors or facilitators responsible for teacher induction program development need to be cognizant of the January milieu and implement appropriate action during that portion of the academic year. Although limited in scope, the teachers' scores on the seven items would seem to be an important data source for determining ways to assist beginning teachers.

Conclusions and Implications

In order to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of meeting our three objectives, we examined the responses from the Monthly Teacher Diaries and the final evaluation. For the first objective, to help new teachers gain success during their induction year, the teachers all described their rewards in light of the development in their students and in themselves. One teacher said that she was effective when she saw students gain an understanding of a new concept. According to the local district supervisor and program liaison, these teachers were able to plan beyond one day at a time. For the second objective, to develop a support system for new teachers, we recognized a developing collegiality among the beginning teachers with discussions extending beyond the meeting times. As a group, the new teachers experienced quite a few personal problems, e.g., death of a spouse. Throughout these life experiences, the group remained intact and offered personal support. One teacher requested more scheduled meetings throughout the year. This may be related to the ever-present stress for the beginning teacher which often results in abandonment of the teaching career. (Ryan, 1990). Future programs should perhaps feature more approaches to stress management through stress reduction (Gold, 1989). For the third objective, to serve as a facilitator not as an evaluator, the teachers stated that we acted as consultants and allowed them to express their opinions and concerns. Because we were not judging the new teachers, we were not a threat. Ongoing assistance at monthly meetings was essential to the program's success. This opportunity to vent their frustrations within a supportive atmosphere was the one repeated comment.

Future programs should also adapt some highlights from this teacher induction model such as the availability of facilitators to answer individual questions during outside conferences. Another success in the program, the regularly scheduled group meetings, should be a part of any project. One teacher remarked that as a result of attending the sessions, she sought advice from her colleagues in school. This study demonstrated that nurturing beginning teachers is essential for program effectiveness. Hopefully, this same caring atmosphere transferred to the novice teachers' classrooms.

Although not suggested by the first year teachers, one recommendation is to include classroom visits. However, when they are imposed on beginning teachers, a number of questions arise. Are new teachers willing to open their doors? Will classroom visits be regarded as assessment rather than assistance? Will classroom visits conflict with the negotiated contract? Future research should continue to consider the role of the consultant versus the role of the evaluator in the design of teacher induction programs.

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Appendix A

Monthly Teacher Diary

Name: Date:

1. List the positive experiences you had this month.

2. List any problems you encountered and indicate if you solved them or if they still exist.

3. What needs or questions do you have that must be answered?

4. What are your projected goals for the coming month?

5. On a scale of 1 - 5, with 5 being the highest, how would you rate yourself in the following areas?

__ classroom management

__ classroom discipline

__ student rapport

__ faculty rapport

__ parent rapport

__ lesson planning

__ overall growth

## Appendix B

### Teacher Induction Program Evaluation

1. What was most rewarding about your first year as a teacher? Why?

2. What was most frustrating about your first year as a teacher? Why?

3. How did your student teaching experience help prepare you for your first year as a teacher?

4. How did your teacher education courses help prepare you for your first year as a teacher?

5. How could your teacher education program better prepare you for your first year of teaching?

6. In what ways did your principal help you during your first year of teaching?

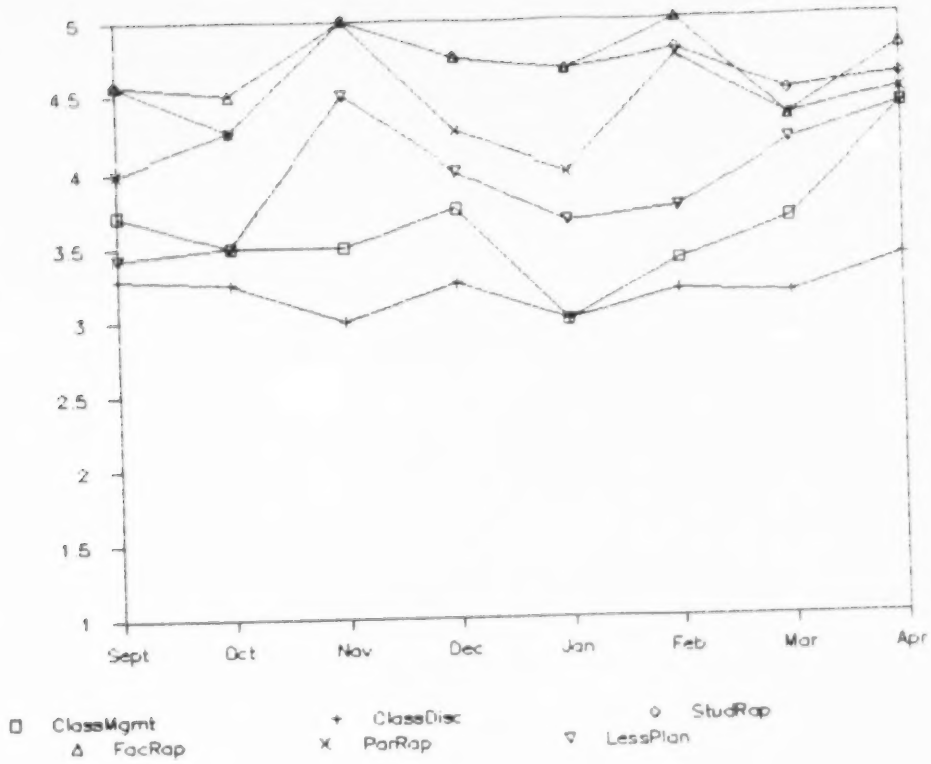
7. In what ways did your colleagues help you during your first year of teaching?

8. In what ways did the program facilitator help you during your first year of teaching?

9. How could your principal better help you during your first year of teaching?

10. How could your colleagues better help you during your first year of teaching?

11. How could the program facilitator better help you during your first year of teaching?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StudRep
FacRep
ParRep
LessPlan

Figure 1

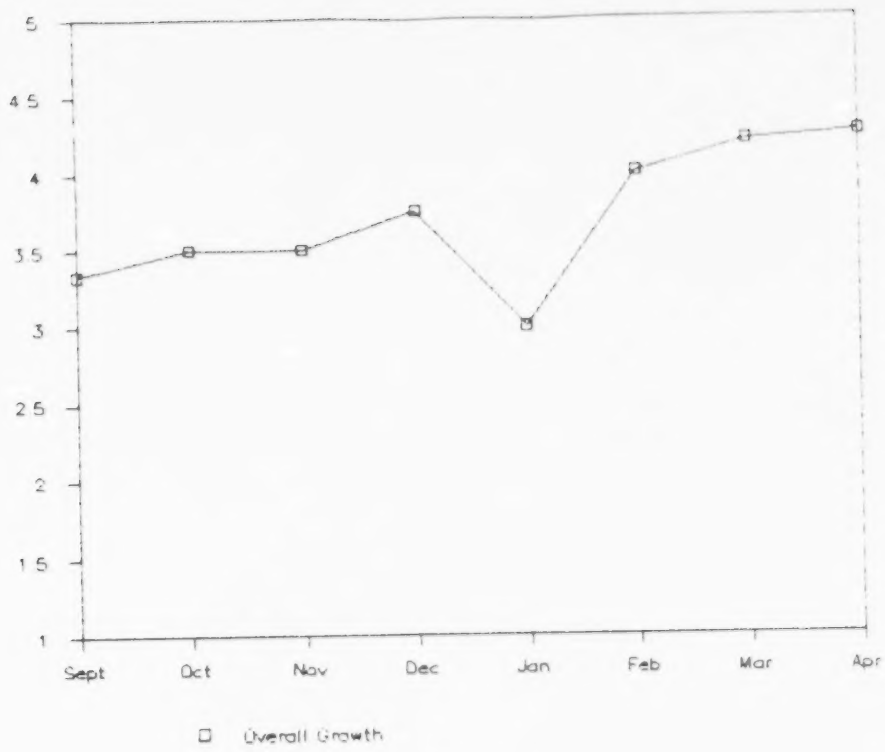
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Figure 2